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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PMDL](#) [PREL](#) [SW](#)
SUBJECT: SWEDEN'S FOREIGN POLICY STATEMENT 2010 - NO MORE
NEUTRALITY, SWEDEN IS IN "POLITICAL ALLIANCE"

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Reftel: Stockholm 68
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Summary

¶1. On February 17, Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt presented the Government's annual Foreign Policy Statement to the Parliament -- the first such statement to be delivered since the Lisbon Treaty came into force. In it, Bildt outlined a Swedish foreign policy more integrated into the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) than ever before, where the priority is to strengthen the EU as a global actor. "This is the best way to safeguard our values and national interests in an increasingly complex world." Other highlights:

--On Afghanistan, Bildt pledged Sweden would increase its development efforts and work to strengthen the EU's civilian presence as outlined in the AfPak "Blue Book" published during the Swedish EU Presidency.

--On Russia, Bildt toned down his remarks, largely avoiding the criticism of previous years. He merely welcomed Moscow's statements about the importance of rule of law.

--"Iran is on course for confrontation with the rest of the world," Bildt said, adding that oppression of human rights activists is "unacceptable." Tehran has failed to explain its intentions behind its nuclear program, and on this matter the international community "must act in unison."

End Summary.

Security Policy: No More Neutrality

¶2. At the outset of his Foreign Policy Statement, Bildt stressed that the Lisbon Treaty is "a decisive step" and "membership of the European Union means that Sweden is part of a political alliance and takes its share of responsibility, in the spirit of solidarity, for Europe's security." He reiterated the Swedish "solidarity clause" first uttered in 2007: "Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to act the same way if Sweden is similarly affected."

¶3. Note: In comparison, the 2009 Statement's focus was on Nordic military cooperation, and the importance of "close cooperation with NATO" -- something not mentioned this time. However, when interviewed after the debate, Bildt said he is open to the possibility of an investigation into Swedish NATO membership. Separately, the solidarity clause stems from two reports from the Parliamentary Defense Commission (comprised of representatives from all parties in Parliament). The language that Sweden will not stay passive if an attack would strike another EU member or Nordic country first appeared in the report of 2007; this "solidarity clause" was approved by all seven parties in Parliament. By 2008,

the second report added that "this means that Sweden can contribute with military support in crises and conflict situations." End Note.

Afghanistan: More Development, More EU Civilians

¶4. "Threats that originate far away from Sweden can be just as palpable as those that are rooted in our proximity," Bildt stated, adding that extremist groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan have demonstrated abilities in carrying out attacks with far-reaching consequences. Some 90% of heroin on Swedish streets comes from Afghanistan. Therefore, Sweden should continue to contribute with both civilian and military resources to "successfully complete our mission in Afghanistan." Referring to the killing of two Swedish officers earlier in the month (Ref A), Bildt said, "Only by successfully completing our mission in Afghanistan can we show that the losses suffered were not in vain." (Note: since the deaths, opinion polls indicate growing public support for Swedish troops in Afghanistan.) He also stated it is the Government's intention to increase Sweden's development aid efforts and to strengthen the EU's civilian operations as outlined in the "far-reaching action plan" Sweden drew up during its EU Presidency outlining "the European Union's commitment to this vulnerable region." (Ref B)

¶5. MP Goran Lennmarker, Chairman of the Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, said in the debate following Bildt's presentation that "It is us that need to do the job...what would happen if we left ISAF?" Arguing that a Taliban government would not be accepted in large parts of Afghan society, he added, "It is therefore important to stress that we in Parliament have a broad agreement...six (Note: of seven total) parties support Swedish troops in Afghanistan."

Russia: Toning Down the Rhetoric

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¶6. On Russia, Bildt abandoned his usual harsh criticism, saying only that "Sweden welcomes the Russian President's statements on the importance of a functioning rule of law and an extensive modernization of Russian society" and expressing hope that Russia will become a member of the WTO. Note: In contrast, in 2008 Bildt expressed concern over Russia's "authoritarian direction" and strongly criticized "Russia's aggression against Georgia" -- "an unacceptable violation of the territorial integrity of another state," as well as "a blow to the international law that is the very basis of peaceful and stable relations between states." The Government remained critical in 2009, asserting in its defense bill that Moscow had ambitions to regain its former position as a superpower and highlighting concerns over developments in the Russian armed forces. "The Georgia War demonstrated that the Russian threshold for using military violence in its neighboring region was reduced." The Government acknowledged that Russia had vital interests in Belarus, Ukraine, the Barents Sea and the Arctic, but maintained that "these regions must be considered to be part of the larger Swedish sphere of interest" as well. End Note.

EU Expansion

¶7. Bildt took credit for the Swedish EU Presidency's work on European integration process in the Western Balkans, mentioning Croatia's membership negotiations, visa liberalization for Macedonia (FYROM) and Montenegro, and Serbia's EU membership application. He also spoke of continued Swedish support to Turkish and Icelandic EU membership and stressed the importance of implementing the Eastern Partnership program.

Iran and the Middle East

¶8. "Iran is on course for confrontation with the rest of the world," Bildt said, adding that oppression of human rights activists is "unacceptable." Tehran has failed to explain its intentions behind

its nuclear program, and on this matter the international community "must act in unison." A credible peace process between Israelis and Palestinians needs to be established to achieve a two-state solution, he continued. There needs to be a "clear voice of Europe" in this matter. "The conclusions adopted by the European Union during the Swedish Presidency gave a firm foundation for its continued policy in the area. Among other points, the conclusions establish that the negotiations are to be based on the pre-1967 borders, the settlements are illegal, all final status issues are to be included in the negotiations - including the status of Jerusalem as capital of two states - and both parties are to refrain from provocative actions."

Internet Security

19. Bildt said the government will prioritize freedom and security in communication systems and will answer the call of the UN's Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression to participate in developing protection for freedom of expression in electronic media. Bildt announced that a special government reference group will be appointed. BARZUN